

Father Fintan Oldham

September 4th is the anniversary of the death of Father Fintan Oldham. Thomas Oldham was born in Hickman Mills, Missouri, on March 17, 1913. As a child he lived in Lawton, Oklahoma, where he attended public school for the first six grades of his elementary education.

A convert to Catholicism, he was baptized in London, Ohio, in 1925. He then completed the seventh and eighth grades at the Josephinum Pontifical College orphanage grade school in Columbus, Ohio. While attending school in Ohio, Tom worked at various jobs, mainly in the cotton fields.

On June 14, 1928, Tom Oldham arrived at Subiaco as a brother-candidate. In 1931, when he was 18 years old, he decided to complete his secondary education and he enrolled in our academy, graduating with the class of 1935. As a leader in athletic activities, he became a living legend among Subiaco's sports' heroes.

Thomas Oldham professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on September 21, 1937, receiving the name Fintan. He attended our seminary and was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop John B. Morris at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Little Rock on June 11, 1942.

Following his ordination, Father Fintan became athletic director and a teacher in the academy until 1945 when he was assigned as athletic director and assistant coach on the faculty of Laneri High School in Fort Worth, Texas.

During his eight-year stay on the Laneri faculty, Father Fintan also served the spiritual needs in Fort Worth. He was chaplain to Carswell Air Force Base, the Knights of Columbus, the Sisters of Our Lady of Victory convent as well as their college and academy students.

He also served as city-wide director of all Catholic high school CYO groups, and assisted at St. Mary of the Assumption parish.

In 1953, Father Fintan returned to Subiaco to become director of the scholastics, a position that he held for nine years. This was an era when almost one-third of the academy students belonged to the scholasticate. Until his final days, Father Fintan affectionately referred to his former charges as "his boys" and continued to offer them assistance and support.

In 1963, Father Fintan became public relations director for the abbey and the academy. He was instrumental in raising funds to cover the debt on the church and in the erection of Coury House, Heard Hall, and the academy's athletic complex.

Father Fintan also served as director of the brothers, and from 1967 until 1974, he was assistant pastor at St. Edward's Church in Little Rock. In 1974 he was named administrator of St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Fort Worth, Texas. He was recalled to the abbey in 1976 to become secretary of the Alumni Association and mission pastor of St. Mary's Church in Barling, Arkansas.

Retirement came in December of 1979 after Father Fintan suffered a back injury in a car accident. Later, he underwent aneurysm surgery. Then, in early 1980, two inoperable tumors were discovered embedded deep in the brain with a diagnosis of terminal brain cancer. Father Fintan spent the last months of his life in the abbey infirmary where he died on Thursday afternoon, September 4, 1980.

At the time of his death, Father Fintan was 67 years old and in the 42nd year of his monastic profession, the 38th of his priesthood. He is buried in our cemetery.

